

THE LURE OF THE SEA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

'LOVE LIKE THE SEA'

ONE VOL., CR. 8VO, PRICE 6s.

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THE LURE OF
THE SEA BY
J. E. PATTERSON

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To
A. St. JOHN ADCOCK.

My Dear A——,

Nigh thirty years ago, during a glorious and all too brief spell of vagabondage on the coasts of Greece and some of its many islands, I, one golden afternoon, fell asleep in such a bit of 'longshore scenery as I have endeavoured to picture in the first few lines of this attempt to write a poem on a classical subject. In my sleep I dreamt that some ancient pirates beached their galley on the spot, and came ashore to offer a sacrifice to Poseidon. That dream bore me company about the world, peeping to remembrance now and then; till at last I put it into verse, was disappointed and destroyed the effort—in a way, Poseidon's goods given as a burnt offering to Apollo. Then, when I could no more go to sea—where, according to all the laws of the appropriate; such a thing should have been written—and was tallying timber on the squalid, ugly dockside in Cardiff, the apparently right moment came. There, in chance minutes of leisure, amid the rattle and clatter, the dirt and the cursing of life off and 'about a coaling dock, the idea took fresh shape and words. But in the new rendering my dream-pirates were, alas, left out of the scheme.*

Two years or so after that—nearly fifteen years since now—the poem was issued privately to a number of friends

**See page 238 of "My Vagabondage."*

and generous admirers, under the title of "The Mermaid: A Lyrical and Descriptive Monologue." On the advice of some of those friends, a dozen copies were subsequently sent to the Press. The result was a far warmer welcome than I had ever dreamt would be given to any poetic effort of mine, hence my thanks to those kindly critics for their encouragement, and for the opinion that the effort deserved to be more widely known.

Later on the thought occurred to me that the human side of the story had been too much ignored, so I returned to my long-neglected pirates, and made changes and additions which amount to about half the present narrative. It is because of these endeavours at improvement that the poem is now republished and offered especially to you, who will need no persuading that I look neither on it nor on the pieces following it as being of that real poetry of the ocean which we—the greatest of maritime nations, and a people with a range of poets equal to those of any other race—should have put before the world long ago, yet still show no adequate sign of producing. And, while trying to better that which was deemed to be worthy of high praise and the recognition of those persons who are interested in poetry, I trust that I have not attained to a lessening of its value in the eyes of my friend of these latter days.

-Yours fraternally,

J. E. P.

Billericay. January, 1912.

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PRELUDE

HUNGERINGS

*Warp her out and let her swing across the Bay, with yards
healed free ;*

*While the leeward surges sing the day's long dirge on
Western Sea.*

*Warp her out—my soul is sick of traders' petty thoughts
and pride ;*

*Lay her on the starboard tack,—my compass, silent, chart
for guide.*

*Give, O give me back again the God of oceans and of skies !
Give me back the endless spread of space where noble
thoughts and prayers may rise.*

*Warp her out and set her free—earth is home no more
to me ;*

Here's suspicion, here is greed ; here is glorious liberty.

*I would know once more the heave of spacious decks above
the swell,*

*Feel the salt spray on my face, and hear the winds their
wild tales tell.*

• *Give, O give me back again the openness of Nature's face !
Give me back the wild sea's roar to steady this empty pride
of place !*

**DAUGHTERS
OF NEREUS**

ARGUMENT.

The crew of a pirate galley has put into a small harbour in the *Ægean* Sea for water and provisions (Time, about 700 B.C.). After worshipping at an altar of Poseidon, selling some plunder for their immediate wants, drinking at a seaman-host's wine-shop (where the boatswain, in spite of superstition, tells a lie about his having been wrecked by a mermaid's song), they pass an altar to Pluto. One of them asks the others to make an offering here; but, led by the boatswain, they mock at the idea of worshipping a god with no power at sea. Pluto passes at the moment, invisible in his magic helmet. He follows them to their galley; so does a boy, who steals aboard unnoticed. In getting the galley away, the man, who would have offered a sacrifice, is drowned. Pluto appears as a seaman, and is shipped in the dead man's place; he does this in the hope of getting revenge on the pirates, because out of Hades he has no power as a god. When the galley gets an offing, he summons Hermës and sends him to Poseidon with a request for help. The result is that some sirens try to sing the craft to ruin; but the seamen are too drunk to hear them. Pluto then asks Poseidon for a gale, to rouse the men from their drunken stupor. This is also granted, the nereids singing all the time. Now, however, the men are too hard at work in the gale for the songs to take effect on them; but when the wind lulls, and they are dozing about in utter weariness, a mermaid sings them into glamorous stupor, while Pluto steers their galley to the rocks.

Daughters of Nereus

PART I

Late come ashore, with load of blood-got bales
Of Tyrian glories marked for foreign sales,
A pirate crew—salt-crusted, brown, unkempt,
Of duty, country, friends and kin exempt—
In breezy boldness, got of oceans, sought
The altar of their trident god, enwrought
In part and decked with pillaged splendours. There
It stood, but half-a-galley's length from where
The white surf briefly put a fair bride's lace
Upon the golden sand; the sweeping grace
Of citron, lime and syca'more to right,
To left, and inland far. 'Twas piled of bright,
Green, mottled searock, shells, and diverse things
From craft which then lay' neath the murmurings
Of ocean's tides and streams; 'twas high festooned
With garlands from the deep, that softly crooned
A hymn of service from the blue abyss,
And on the altar steps would lave its kiss. •
There they, in sinewy tones made keen and strong •
By shouting 'gainst wild gales, hove out this song: •

Corsairs

God of yonder rolling seas,
(Swing the offering altar-high !)
God of calm and full-sail breeze,
Hear thy seamen cry

Unto thee their worshipping
(Boatswain, heave the precious spoil !)
As to thee their best they bring,
Got of seaward moil.

Great Poseidon, give us ear,
(Many spoils our fathers knew !)
Bless us, even as we fear
Seas that leap and hew.

We are not of this dull strand ;
(Give us of the trader's store !)
Foot-to-foot and hand-to-hand
We fight from shore to shore.?

Mighty god of oceans vast,
(How those dark Phœnicians fought !)
Send us galleys, homing fast,
All with treasures fraught.

Landsmen are such timid souls,
(Master, pour the luscious wine !)
Fearful of their gods and doles,
Less bent to fight than pine.

•

But thy sailors come to thee,
(There the offering lies !)
With the freedom of the sea,
Marked of great emprise.

This done, they careless sought the harbour streets,
Where flamed the swift abandonment of eye ;
The languorous yet impassioned heave of breast ;
The lips that moved instinctively to kiss ;
The mien whose palsied, silent burthen was—
“O strangers of the waters deep and dread,
What terrors have ye done, or would do here ?”
Where aged mothers, leaning weakly 'gainst
The frame-posts of their doors, slow-eyed those men
Of sun and sea-swarthed hue and lusty gait,
In lip-pursed silence still remembering—
With time-dulled tuggings at their hearts—young
sons
Who drew away to sea, forgetting all
Save that inherent something which compelled,
And never more were heard of native ears.

And 'mongst the watchers there were some whose eyes
Looked honest scorn—men older than the corsair crew,
Of deep-sea nets, hard toil and humble thought,
Whose craft were ever mothered by the coast;
Yet no less daring they, except in wrong.
Again, some others, honest but in place
And circumstance, threw looks of asking for
A vacant berth aboard the buccaneer;
And here and there a youth, whose roving bent
Had quickened in the dullness of the shore,
Was seen to linger in the corsairs' steps,
Enwrapt of imaged ventures on the deep.

Anon the pirates sought their galley once
Again, and brought ashore some trinkets, silk,
And cloth—the poorest of their plunderings;
Yet common things of high estate and name,
Are splendours unto minds of homely toil.
To sale haphazard on the beach they put
This gear of foreign make and colours rare,
In all its added charm of sunlit sheen
And grace of newness, thrust the more to view
By simpleness of scene. The boatswain, man
Of ready mirth and inborn wit, full quick to seize

Upon each favouring chance, the salesman was ;
And many an envious look, a few of keen
Delight, ensued.

• Thus primed with native coin,
They straightway went to quench their lively thirst
In an adjacent wine-shop, where the host—
A man of lumbering middle, big of voice
And oath, his face a dipping sun, and limbs
Like toughened spars—had spent the most of life
'Twixt heaven and changing seas; whereof he told,
At times, such tales as few believed. A boon
Companion he to his own sort; one who
Had caught the knack of rhyming in his youth,
And now trolled out his ballads of old things
To many airs well-known in ports—songs full
Of salty winds and sprays, and actions which
Were never meant for young or gentle ears.
And what a scene of riot-talk was that,
Meanwhile the host went gaily to and fro,
The game for custom playing well; of boasts,
And doings such as ne'er had been; of wrecks
On wondrous far-off coasts, great hero-deeds;
Of ladies fair, young, rich, who came to woo
These gentle villains of the ruffian seas,
And that because some fancied handsomeness,

Or fondly-thought romance, hung round and clothed
The subjects of their loves; and other tales
Of other acts and scenes of roving life:
Each daring liar venturing a run
Beyond the one who lied but just before,
And everyone believing in his heart
That all the others lied much worse than he.

At length the boatswain, over-primed with wine,
And envious of the host's more vivid tales,
In vinous courage asked if any yet
Had heard a siren's fatal song. At this
A silence fell upon them all; for those
To whom such dreaded notes were ~~happily~~ still
Unknown remembered how 'twas said at large,
That he who falsely boasted having heard
A nereid sing, when next he went to sea
Would hear one and would die. And those
Who stood about, at lattices and doors,
The wondering stay-at-homes who had so gaped
Each story in, now held their breath,
Agog, with heads out-stretched, eyes oped at full,
To hear ~~what~~ marvels more this spacious man
Of cheery quips and wildering seas had yet
To tell. Then, when his shipmates all had said
Their nays, that singing son of Bacchus and

The sea had joined them, too, the boatswain up
And swung athwart their ears this tale of how
He heard a siren sing his ship to wreck.

Boatswain

We loaded up with Grecian cloths that shouted
Tyrian hues,
To trade them in Britannia for tins and fishy glues;
From Salamis we started, when the sun was one-
hand high,
And headed into Myrtoum Sea, our galley deep but
dry.

Our master was Leucadian, and wondrous seamen
they;
But most of us were Thracians;—I came from Scyros
bay.
That eve we turned Cythera point, the open sea
ahead;
And every man was merry, for the dipping sun was
red.

Thus seven days and seven nights we went into the west,
T'wards where the great dark ocean lies whose waters never rest;
That night, the eighth, O strange, strange night! as true as ships do float,
We saw the staggering things of time move round our fatal boat.

Weird fishes came and nosed us, as if to smell our bent;
No breath across the ocean blew, and yet our sail was rent;
The waters spouted fire and ran, and leapt towards the skies!
Till every man in horror went, and blinded were his eyes.

Then, when the middle watch was on, all things grew black and fell—
You could have cheered the darkness then and got enough for hell.
But, what was worse than all things else, the air was full of life,
Where all soul things in Nature seemed to be at fearful strife.

And, when the watch was almost spent, a light
mysterious came,
That lit all things from sky to sea in one great
purple flame.
That watch we saw the blood-red moon go down in
• a blood-red sea,
And, of all the sights a sailor sees, that was enough
for me.

The day that followed was no day—a sort of twilight
reigned ;
And still as death all things had grown, yet all things
were most strained ; .
And when the night came on again 'twas filled with
sounds so sweet
That moons of melody were held in every moment
fleet.

Sometimes it seemed as if the sea was full of sirens' songs,
Which swelled up to the heavens high, and bound us as with thongs ;
And when they softly died away, one singing seamaid thrilled Our hearts and bodies with a song that all remembrance killed.

Odysseus never heard such songs, nor such Calypsos
knew,
For these were Oceanides that out of gale-foam
grew;
They could have sung young Jason from a hundred
fleece of gold,
Or charmed the stone of Sisyphus to leave its Hadean
hold.

At least the chief among them might, for none could
equal her;
And when her song was at its best, we glamoured
past all stir,
'Twas then our galley dashed aground, and woke us
with the shock, •
And over sheer to larboard went upon a fearsome
rock !

And not a man of all our crew 'cept mine own self
was saved; {
Our galley, too, and everyt'ing the hungry sea
in-graved.
All night and half next day I swam, of this the gods
are 'ware; .
Then landed on a hostile coast, to learn a slave's
hard care.

The boatswain paused—not that his improvised Adventures were run short, or his unchecked Imagination flagged as yet; nor that The pilot of the mind, Discretion, said— “Now shorten sail, a fogged coast lies a-lee.” “Twas that the silence marking all else there Had grown so deep, that in its depth there was A sense of stillness so profound, so full Of pent oppression, wonder, as to put This corsair’s helm abruptly hard-a-lee; Almost ere he was ‘ware, his bellying sails Of speech were all aback.

A little while
This heavy feeling held. Meantime aloof,
In cogitations deep, the master sat,
His mood suspicious of hard thoughts now scarce
Restrained. The boatswain then, his tact once more
Alert, upturned his tankard, spilt its dregs
Upon the floor, and gaily calle^d the host
To fill all up at his expense.—Not his
Had been the only turn to hear and ‘scape,
As old Odysseus did, a mermaid’s song
Of death, he said: Full many a seaman else
Than he had done the same: What, then, was there

To marvel at in his small, simple talk ?
Whereon the host, with dubious winks aside
To some who winked return, again went in
And out for bursting flagons of his best ;
And all once more were merry as a crew
On homeward run before a stiffish breeze,
When drear and stale the long round-voyage has been.
With him, the host, these pirates sang and drank
Their fill ; then swung themselves abroad again,
To join their galley and at once to sea.

But ere they reached the quiet harbour-side,
A temple of the nether god was passed ;
And one who held that every god should have
Appeasement made by such as they, who paid
Respect to no man's law, suggested they
Should enter straight and make unto the god
An offering. But this the boatswain scorned ;
And others, keen to play quick courtiers
To one who had such power in work and peace
Aboard, with him in careless laughter scoffed,
That they should pay such grace and store of heed
To gods whose sole dominions were on land.
The master, mindful of his boatswain's love
To rule the crowd at will, put in a word

To check h's vaulting aims. But loud they swore,
Undisciplined and vile, that being now off-board
They were the masters of themselves, of what
They did ; and unto Pluto they would make
No sacrifice.

The god, then passing by,
Unseen, heard what was said and with them went
Towards their craft. And one there was who trod
Beside him, seen yet all unnoted by
The buccaneers—a lad, he was, so fair
Of face and mien, so bright of eye, he might
Have been Apollo's son, and heir to all
His beauty and his grace. And when they came
To where the galley lay, he stole aboard
In privacy, a mingled joy and fear
Within his heart.

Meanwhile the men
Hard put to get their robber-craft away,
Now blundered at the work, and have, and cursed
Each one the other as a fool unnt
To go to sea. Till one at length, he who
Had fitly sought to pay the nether god
A corsair's dues, slipped mumbling in and clove
The harbour for a space ; then, spluttering, sank.

His fellows, half in wonder, half
In angry doubt that he had gone as some
Shore-lout would go, gazed helpless at the spot
'Neath where he lay, no more a pirate-hand.
But death stood small where oft his face was seen;
And those hard sons of plunder and the seas,
Paid little heed to lose a man at such
An hour. And Pluto, seeing this, at once
Appeared to view, in sailor-garb, bronzed like
To some old salt, and bearded full and black.
For service in the dead man's place he spoke
Straightway. Whereat the boatswain, quick to see
Upon his face a something strangely more
Than he could fathom, raised an oath and bade
The stranger seek elsewhere to ship. 'They had
No room for mystics in a fighting crew,
He growled in scorn, and turned again to work.
But here the master up and stood as such—
A casual glance he threw athwart the god's
Dark eyes, his seaward presence, bearing, strength,
And said—"I like thy look; join in and heave,
I'll test thee more at sea."

PART II

Here all becalmed the pirate galley lies,
O'er-cupped by beauteous night. Her flapping sails
And creaking yards the heavens upbraid for wind,
If but enough to rouse her crew to work.
Meanwhile from near a neighbouring island comes
A murmuring sound of sweetness, touching here
And there the waters' face, and seeming then
To rise and float above, uncertain, faint—
A mingled, broken, buoyancy of song,
In words unsure, although to ears attuned
Aright it subtly says, in prelude-wise—

Seamaidens' Chant

Now skies are wondrous fair ;
And Night's small sentinels in slyness peep
Through foam-like clouds that lazy creep
As thin as wanton air ;
And cooing cats'-paws murmur low •
Along the rippled bosom of the heaving deep,
And weary eyes are peacefully asleep :

Now phosphorescent glow
Of waters, as they swish
The idle vessel's side,
Lone seamen tell of depths where eyeless fish
Can feel nor wind nor tide.

Now hornéd is the moon,
And smooth the ebbless sea,
Enwrapt amid the glamouring mystery
Of witching night.—
Ah, now's the noon,
The full, ripe summer-time,
The flood-tide point, the prime
Of her delight—
Of her delight, who yonder swims,
In beauty, radiant mōe
Then is the flush that limps
Day's eastward door ;
Who swims in beauty, and can float in song
Such as did draw Odysseus' ship along
To Ogygia's isle ;
Who has her smile
From Aphrodite caught,

What time the Queen of Love her wayward lover
sought.

Now rides the soft Grey King,*
On damp and silent wing,
Above the ever restless wave
That slowly moves along the mighty unstoned grave,
Wherein are merged some millions of men
Or slain or drowned ;
So does she then
Full gaily float around,
Where hidden rocks—
An unknown current seeks—
Give fearsome shocks,
Begetting irremediable leaks ;
And while with pearly scalloped shell—
Found in an iridescent grot,
Where Nerejds dwell,
By Care and Pain forgot—
Her amber hair, of finest scented weed,
She combs ; and there her song she sings, to lead
The drifting vessel where
Her sisters' caverned homes in secret lie,
Rock-hidden from the human eye.

*Fog.

Soft, soft as the sigh of the surging sea
On a silvery strand, when sleepily
Long, slow waves shoreward roam ;
Low, low, low as the coo of the amorous gull,
When he struts on a rock at his season's full
To make himself a home ;
Sweet, sweet as the flesh of that pinky shell,
Which fishermen term the queenly belle
Of all this realm of foam,
Is the song that leaves her sea-loved lip
Deathward to lure the wayless ship.

Siren

O I am a wild seamaiden,
Who sport with the waves at will,
And look for the ship deep-laden,
When winds do the waters thrill,
And the Furies have their fill—
Their fill, their fill,
And the Furies have their fill.

I care not for your landsmen
Who fear to come to sea ;
But the sailor bold,

Be he young or old,
Is the full of my ecstacy,
When he drives on the rocks alee—alec,
When he drives' on the rocks alee.

And so for the seamen weary
My witching notes I wake,
As over the sea's breast dreary
Towards my cave they make,
Where soon their ship shall break—
Shall break, shall break,
Where soon their ship shall break.

Pluto

Ay, sing, thou handmaid by Calypso and
My brother lent* to do me service here ;
Sing on, sing on—so shall be lured to d ath
These wretches who would no libations pour
To me ; who drained their wine bowls, laughing,
full
Of scoffs that they, who part amphibious are
And smack of salt, should make an offering

* Pluto had no power as a god when outside of Hadēs. In personality he was much more human than the Hebrew devil.

Unto a god whose kingdom's not as this
Strange heaving waste, whose mystery none can
sound.

Yet they shall see, shall see—these jesters vain
And ribald. But the boy, the boy ! Ah, no ; .
It suits me not to hurry him to death—
So frank of eye, with Aphrodite's stamp
Upon his face,—some mother's treasure slipt
The leash of home for venture's sake. He may
Escape—jo tell strange tales of wondrous scenes,
Which were not wondrous if they were not new,
And set his fellows hungering for the like. . . .
Alas, the sea grows clear again ! And thou,
Poseidon, where's thy help in this revenge ?

Seamaidens' Chant

When Zephyrs play, or Eurus gently sweeps
The star-lit surface of these fathomed deeps ;
Or whispering comes the soft Etesian wind ;
Or dry Solano, leaving woe behind,
We mingle with their sound
The music of our song,

And woo the ship aground,
Where undiscovered streams fast throng
To rock or shoal or bank,
And many a fair craft struck a plank
Then dropt to fishy depths beneath ;
Where whitened bones are hidden,
Where faults are never chidden,
Where all our loves are bidden—
To a green and golden heath.
Over the waters, with the soft coo-coo,
Our voices go stealing away ;
Lulling the senses as fond lovers do,
Winning our loves with our lay ;
Rising and falling, and rising again ;
Casting a spell o'er the hearts of men,
Finding and winding about their ears, ~~the~~
Circe-like soothing their human fears ;
Winding and binding them all to our hearts,
Leading them down where a tear never starts,
To our white, golden-green and soft vi. let-hued
Deep grot in the 'gulping sea—

Pluto

Nay, nay, chant less, seammaids ; but sing ye more.
Your chants are vain ; your songs have potent force.

So sing your witching strains—ay, sing ye on,
Till every seaman here cracks heart and nerve
To follow you, entranced in song to death.

Siren

Sweetly o'er the shimmering blue,
Diamond-flecked by mirrored stars,
Rovers, brave, I sing to you
Songs of joyous harbour-bars :

Songs of havens past compare,
Havens rich in fruits and wine ;
Where bacchantes are fair—
Hera lacks their charms divine.

Come, come—why toil so hard ?
Toil is but for plodding minds ;
Yield to me—your ship I guard
Safe from cross-course wrecking winds.

Follow, follow where I sing ;
Leave the helm—your ship comes straight ;
Round your hearts my spell I fling ;
Mark the joys that on you wait.

Boatswain (dreaming)

I tell thee, Phœb', true as thine eyes are bright,
I made no love to that Egyptian fair. . . .
No, no. . . . This is not kind of thee, sweet
• Phœb'. . . .
'Twas she to me that all the loving made ;
And e'en at that I said her nay,—'tis true,
'Tis true,—I swear it is ; ay, by the fork
Of him who rules us, I do swear it ! . . . Nay, nay
Mar not thy beauty with so foul a frown ;
It gains no end—'cept that it makes me tell
Thee once again (more wine—I thirst) that I
Do count thy ruddy cheeks and Grecian charms,
Thy pinky bust and fuller-shape and ways
A whole sea's breadth before her hue ~~Nile~~,
Her slender limbs, her langourous eyes and looks,
That snaky fashion in her movements (*awakes in
part*)—damn
All these crazed dreams of women here at sea !
They mean some mischief—gale, or wreck, or worse.
(*Sleeps again*).

Boy

I wish that I could sleep, or find some food ;
For here I hunger so that slumber seems

E'en further off than home. . . . Pod' mother mine,
How she will miss her elder son to-night !
Yet 'twas to be—I could not stay on that
Dull shore, when once my lungs had drank their fill
Of this ; though now I do begin to doubt
If that this ship is all I wish she were. . . .
O come, sweet breeze, and stir these seamen from
Their sleep, that I may join their work and get
Some food—I fear to move until I am
Of use to them, lest they should straight resent
My stolen presence here.

Pluto

How like to dogs they lie, all drunk in sleep—
All dead to pleasure, and to danger lost ;
Not e'en her song has power to stir them from
This bacchic sleep. . . . Poseidon, thou must lend
Me other aid—some stronger force ; or I
Must find me means anew whereby to pay
These god-revilers for their crime.—Stay yet
A while,—I hear her voice again ; mayhap
'Twill stir them now.

Siren

I sing o'er the waves when they wander low,
And the winds have ceased to fret and blow—
Fair as the skies on a sunny morn,
Sweet as the notes of an Orpheus' horn,
Is the song that I sing to you, rovers bold,
Of fair treasures more rare than are gems and gold.

I sing of realms where dreams come true,
And Sorrow hides her head in shame ;
Where Pleasure never bids adieu,
And glory marks the poorest name.

I lead the way to bosoms warm,
White walls of rose-hued shrines of love,
Ensnaring with their wondrous form
E'en gods from goddesses above.

Then wake, O seamen, wake,
And follow where I lead ;
Your winy slumber break—
Give heed, give heed ;
Or long, long may you live to sigh
You took not treasures held so nigh.

Boy

What wondrous song is this I hear at times ?
So sweet it is that I do now forget
My hunger, home and sleep. And yet, so rich
It is, it takes me back to Sinon with
His pipes and sheep, which he so charmed upon
The mountain slopes, that they would dance and
skip
On hinder legs, and play strange pranks in walks
And runs upright, the while he piped his rare,
Wild, ~~magic~~ melody.

Pluto

In vain ! These sea-hogs are too drunk—too drunk
To move at aught, unless it be fierce pain,
Or potent touch of that which made them thus !
Now, brother, come—a shrieking gale must stir
Them out of this ; so let thy furies loose,
Till Hadës gapes to mouth these mockers all.
And thou, grëat Zeus, give help ; unchain thy host—
Let lightnings flash and thunders roar across
This shimmering waste. Diana hide thy light,
So that in darkness thick as their own pitch

These men shall toil ; while winds, this way and
that,

Here howl and rage in chaos driven mad ;

And mighty seas go leaping through the gloom,
In savage glee to crush all things afloat.

PART III

Pluto

Now Naiads sleep, and black the skies appear ;
While sullen waves their crestless heads uprear—
As though the Cyclops play in sport below—
Then backward fall for want of Mistral's blow :
It is the vast sea labouring beneath,
Ere yet its forces rise—a deadly wreath
Of whipping winds and lashing waves of hate,
In ominous silence moving t'wards the gate
That yet doth hold their mighty powers in ;
And e'en the air is murmuring that din
Which nothing makes but those *Eriyyës*
In Tartarus deep, to whom these men of seas
And oaths forgot to sacrifice a sheep
Of night, before they put their sense to sleep
In bacchic worship.

Now on yonder beach
The agitated waters fall, and teach—
By sobs, strange sighs and moans—the weather-
wise
The ~~Spirit~~ of the Storm no longer lies
In idle, lethean sleep. . . .

A gust of wind!—

The gale's forefront, in eager haste to blind
With hissing spray; a heave to lee, and straight
The seaman's instinct leaps to active state,
Wine's shackles bursting at a single heave;
And every man in wonder might believe
Himself transported to some clime unknown,
So great's his stupor and his purpose blown.
Loud shouts and hurrying feet speed fore and aft,
Till not a hand is idle in the craft.
And here the boy, in night and haste unguessed,
A stranger still, allows himself no rest;
But lugs for life at tautening ropes and sails,
As if his years had known as many gales;
Hopeful of food, a-wish for hard-earned sleep,
He even seeks to swing a lengthy sweep.
It is the first wild hurly-burly of
Half-wakened men, who know that round, above,
Below them seethe a thousand instant deaths,
Agog to end their gasping, puny breaths,
As snaps a strain'd thread. Ah, now I hear,
T'wards yon der small, dim isle, whereto we steer
Unknown to all, a melody that steals
Across the waves and e'en my memory seals
To many long-dead harmonies divine;
Such wondrous sweets of hearing as to twine

About the heart like growing, tightening veins
Of running feeling full of pleasure-pains,
Too keen for joyance, over-heated, tense.
And yet in this wild chant there is a sense
Of underlying hate, too subtle far
To touch such crudeness as these pirates are
So sing ye on, with all the rich delight
That ever left your wrecking lips at night.

Seamaidens' Chant

We gleefully now prepare
These battling men to snare
With songs that far shall ring,
As though the wild notes spring
From seraphim in air.
Now Boreas bursts from icy north
And whips our world to wrath ;
There blasting Syrian hurries forth
To line the coast with froth !
Here Africus, or Cæcias, or biting Argestës
Howls at crooked Cynthia, and drives the savage
seas—
Whose crested heads and curling tops
Naught else but adamantine rock ere stops,
Or undiminishable space

Returns to their appointed place—
To foam and hiss, and leap on high
As if to 'front the very sky
And e'en Olympia invade !
While round the rocks—in wild disorder made
To crash and roar, recede, return,
To surge and seethe and spit, and spurn
Their very selves in impotence more fierce than
hate—
These waters sink, then rise to sate
Their greed with worlds of struggling men!

Now rayless darkness reigns ;
And snap Erinyës their*hadæan chains,
And, winging o'er the seven-circling stream,
Return to Night—their ' breeding, black-browed,
dream
And crime-begetting dam—their horrid heads aglow
With writhing snakes, while drops of blood out-flow
Their damned and fearsome eyes :

Now driving cloud and hurrying scud
Shut out the light of moon and star, that would
Assistance give these corsairs in their plight ;
And Death stalks large—in sheer despite

Of Mercy's pleading cry
To spare the unprepared-to-die,
Who go with oath still half-inside their lips
And finish it in hell—and wholesale slips
The tethered souls of men,
As man would free from pound or pen
A flock of frightened sheep !

Now ships—spars gone, full oft a tattered sail ;
And men, who craved a capful, fight the gale
They did not ask—drive helpless on a blind
Lee-shore; while seamen, numbed by cold, hard
bind
Themselves, with grating teeth and flashing eyes,
To try a hand-to-hand, and life the prize,
With fierce, home-gathering Death.

Siren

Wild and weird o'er the gale-lashed sea,
Twisted and twirled by the shrieking wind ;
Seeming a part of its maddened glee !
Now here, now there, ahead, behind ;
I send my song through the blinding spray,
To lead you, mariners, hither astray.

Across the waters and over the deck,
About the sails and among the shrouds ;
Seeking the labouring ship to wreck,
Now lost in the sea, then up in the clouds ;
Hurrying, dallying, never at rest,
Ever bent on a ghoulish quest.

Now high ! then low ; next piercing sweet ;
Then as the sigh of a soul in pain ;
Now seemingly the driving sleet,
And next the cry of the troubled main !
Through hatches, in cabins—now tenderly soft,
Windward and leeward, alow and aloft.

Now borne on the crest of a towering wave,
The tortured soul of the wild Siroc !
Now moaning low in the blue-green grave,
Where the shifting sand, and the submerged rock,
And the coral-reef, and we Sirens lurk
To do Poseidon's special work.

Thrilling the soul, killing the sense,
Dwelling a pause ; . . . now swelling thence
In higher and wilder and sweeter notes,

Which far overhead the mad wind floats !
Appearing of heaven, yet springing from hell ;
Misleading the most when seeming to dwell
To the lee of the fated ship !
Fainting away in the flying spray,
As the sobbing soul of a slaughtered Fay ;
Yearning and turning and burning,
Hiding, revealing,
Wheeling and wounding and healing ;
Playing tattoos on the heart, and eeling
The pulse of the listening soul—
As rolling and tumbling nearer the goal,
Pitching and surging comes the ship—
Is the song that I sing,
And the wild Storm-king
Bears far from mine unkissed lip !

Pluto *

How fast they run from task to task, all toil
And hate !—all eagerness, and shouts that drown
Her song. . . . Ah, now, scarce knowing 'tis her
song,
That seems to be the gale's weird chant of hate

And death, they put the stern t'wards where she
floats

And sings—with no more power o'er their hearts
Than when they, all in vinous stupor slept. . . .
Down, down each rolling vale the galley speeds—
A thing of life, well-nigh, hard-hunted by
These mighty ocean lurchers here, foam-lipped,
Green-hued and keen, that run beside her while
They seem to laugh and hiss—"Run on, run on;
When we are ready, you shall run no more." . . .
But will the hounds run too long thus?—until
These god-revilers have out-reached her song
And all the dangers that surround the shore?
It must not be! Ye Furies turn this wind
And drive them back. Help, help a god!
Who here scarce owns a god's high attribute.

Round veers the breeze, still fierce, and leeward
drifts

The straining craft; as Night her mantle shifts
From east to west, until beneath its edge
These seamen peep for fairer weather's pledge.
But daylight breaks, dull, cold and grey,
Betraying all the elemental fray
Has brought about: sails torn to shreds,
And splintered spars that dangle o'er the heads

Of water-dripping men, whose faces tell
Of toil in salty lines (where lurking dwell
Strong yarns of many storms) ; eyes bleared with
brine,

And matted hair wherein, like frost, low shine
Faint particles of salt ; hard fingers bent
And stiff with oft embracing ropes which lent
A succour from the waves ; decks white and bare,
Except the water swishing here and there ;
The spray-drenched cordage, hatches battened fast,
And broken halyards swaying 'bout the mast—
All proofs of storm unspent. And he, the boy,
Now fed, but wanting sleep and home-wrought joy ;
Adventure dulled to pained discomfort, brand
Of dangers great, where wits nor strength of hand
Are more than chance against the will of gods
Who frown, insatiate, and ply their rods
Of keen, inevitable punishment.

Slow comes the day, and still no sign of rest
In sky or wind—that rears the sea's great breast
Into a myriad of nipples, fierce
And large and white, which hissing rush to pierce
The groaning ship, and yield not life but death.
Now sailors eye their mates ; then catch their breath
And talk, in fear, of hatches over-turned,

Knives stuck in masts, and low blue lights that
burned

But yester-eve about the weather-vane ;
Of many foundered ships that tried in vain
To run a Friday's voyage ; of drowned cats,
And vessels out of which the auguring rats
Decamped when last in port ; of sneezes done
To left, and squealing pigs, and whistling on
The prow by thoughtless lads ; of horsey dreams,
And where the light of woman's eye out-gleams
The brilliance of gems ; and other things
Which fill the sailor's mind with murmurings
And speak to him of wrecks. . . .

Now lulls the gale ;
And shouting corsairs spread another sail
To check the roll, and forge their ship ahead,
Which now is drifting t'wards that thing they dread
As dolphins do the shark, a bristling reef
Of rocks but just awash—a line of grief
More grim than Gorgon-Stethno's horrid face,
Out-lined with foamy effervescent lace
Instead of serpent-hair,—a spot that oft,
Whilst guarding yonder golden beach aloft
Has hurried hence, or down to Hades straight
Despatched, a dozen souls at once.

PART IV

Down drops the night, and all the wind has gone;
Erinyés their share of work have done
And hied them back below. Now stars once more,
And pale young moon in cloudless sky, soft o'er
These waters cast their tender light ; and rolls
The craft from side to side, until she tolls
The bell herself, as if in play to call
The slumbering watch. Now monstrous seas dull
fall

(Like lazy giants wanting mental force
To give a purpose to their feeble course
Of life) against the galley's planks, and flaps
The sails about their masts in mimic claps
Of thunder ; while the worn-out watch on deck—
No longer dreading death or wind or wreck—
Doze here and there, forgetful of the fear
That lee-shore made them feel : not one to steer •
The windless craft remains awake enough,
So long has been the struggle and so rough.
In Pluto's hands the yielding tiller lies,
And at his feet the boy with sleep-sealed eyes.

Siren

Now, now's the hour !
My voice I'll tune to fit the time,
And mould my song with soothing rhyme
And Nereid's power.

As soft as the down on Psyche's arm,
More gentle than youth when its love it seeks
Some shy young maid to tell ;
As potent as Æsculapian balm,
And fair as the flush on a new bride's cheeks
Where chastened beauties dwell ;
More lulling than love when first it speaks
And casts o'er the heart its spell—
Shall my song to the sailors be, now that they sleep
On this subtle old breast of the mystical deep.

Pluto

So let it be—so make thy song this time,
That, while it lasts, no pirate here can say
His heart doth beat. Put forth thy powers all—
And borrow, borrow from thy sisters of the deep,
Till every charm of slumber and delight
Are in thy 'thralling use,

Siren : to the Night

O'er sapphire-depths I float and sing,
While thus you move on world-shot wing ;
And stars their borrowed lustre show,
Calm, faint, and fair with sacred glow.

O beauteous Stars ; ah, soothing Night ;
O wondrous bars of quivering light
That tender roam o'er green-white foam—
Chaste diamonds in an azure dome.

Smile on, O Night—mysterious veil—
While soft I tell my rhythmic tale
Of sweet enchanting grots below,
Where tides are not, nor breezes blow.

Give sleep, O Moon : stir not, O Wind,
I crave the boon, this crew to bind
With spirit-thong, in bonds as strong
As was Calypso's magic song.

Pluto

Ah, now she draws them on !—Now they awake !
See how their heavy heads are raised to catch

Her melodies divine ! Now do they feel
The wondrous force that lies in lyric strains
By magic beauty marked. Sing on, thou maid
Of song and wrecks, of hidden ocean caves
Where many noble ventures lie, that put
To sea in prideful promise of renown !
Sing on, sing on,—thou hast them now ! And I
Will steer their craft where'er thy singing leads.

Siren : to the Sea

Swelling sea and rolling billow,
Ye, whereon my head I pillow
As I braid my yellow hair,
While the Night soft tears is weeping,
And these sailors 'tranced I'm keeping,
Come, assist me them to snare.

As ye wander—rising, falling,
Feathery foam and green mounds calling
On the wind to hold ye up—
Bear their floating home where singing
Here I lie, in hope of bringing
Them to-night with me to sup.

Twist a current, swiftly winding
Past the ship, and straightway finding
Where the rocks in hiding wait.
While I weave a charm about them,
Deeper than the grave without them,
Drift these pirates to their fate.

Pluto

Enmeshed, enchanted, all ensnared, see how
They creep to strain their briny heads across
The bulwarks' top and hear her subtleties
Of song ! Oblivious of aught else, their hearts,
Their stubborn senses, all their beings 'tranced ;
Out-wearied with their toil and passive now,
They feel no languish, know no pain—
Except the pain of sound, which is so sweet
That in itself it wakes a sleeping pain,
Whereof a sadness dear still hides the most.
Their faces, erstwhile heavy with a want
Of thought, are now all eagerness and life
Sharp-pricked ; their ears, too small to hear enough,
Have borrowed further scope from eyes up-closed.
Sing on ! sing on, thou lure to death in song
That drowns all else in Lethe's darkened stream.—

I might have built a prison 'stead of this,
Or an asylum reared for men gone mad
Of wrong. But here's my world a while, this ship;
These scoffers stand for all humanity;
And thou, sea-maid, my symbol art of crime;
The subtle song its great seductiveness
To heads whose moral hearing is awry.
So sing thou on—enraptured keep them all,
Till comes the crash; e'en that adventurer young,
Who hangs enthralled and dumb on each new note,
Far more than do the elders at his sides—
As ever does green youth with things beyond
Its grasp of mind—ay, even he must go;
The flower 'mongst the tares, as life must be.
And yet, and yet—why must he die with them?
That mother dear, who made his bed last night,
In hope that he would come ere all had supped
And left her to her vigil lone and sad,
Will make his bed again and yet again
Till he return, or many years be past.
And if he 'scape this venture of his youth,
Mayhap he will not further try the like.
So be it then—when that the galley strikes,
With me the lad shall safely go to land,
And home be set once more—if 'twere alone
To keep that mother's heart still young. But them—

These learned navigators of crime's sea,
To all its winds and waves a common mark,
Each one of them must go. Hence, nereid, sing,
Till cracks their strained hearing in the rush,
The heights and depths of thy strange melodies';
Ay, keep them thus all 'glamoured with delight,
All 'passioned in thy luscious wealth of song ;
As silent, still, and raptured as yon' stars,
Till down they go, to find fresh stars in scenes
More new and even wonderful than this.

Siren : to the Corsairs

The moonbeams step from wave to wave,
And silver thus each crest ;
The gale is o'er, and idly moves
Old Ocean's loveless breast.
And over heaving foam-capped hills,
Down vales of shimmering green—
Where fishes hold their emerald court,
And rules a Nereid-Queen—
With swaying sails your rolling ship rides high,
T'wards joys so fair they never cause a sigh.

Come, follow on, while thus I sing,
And sweet weird music free ;

My instrument's a crimson shell,
Which Orpheus gave to me ;
The strings are made of Echo's hair,
And finer ne'er have been ;
My bow was by Euterpe lent,
Of all the Nine the queen :
Erato's shade doth dwell within and sings,
And when I pray she breathes upon the strings.

Come to cerulean depths with me—
Hie to our caverns below ;
Come where the mermaidens wanton free,
Down where no suns ever glow.
Crystallised jewels give all light there,
Beryl and sapphire, and all ;
Diamond and emerald and turquoise fair,
Set in a clear amber wall.

Mother-of-pearl is the only thing
Mermaids ever employ ;
All other things, to the songs we sing,
Leave we for you to enjoy.
Down in the mirroring depths beneath

Purple, gold, crimson and white,
Violet and pink in a rainbow-wreath
Render a glorious light.

Gardens we make with bright-hued weeds,
Scented and sweet to the taste ;
Kisses we give till the pale lip bleeds—
Come to our bosoms in haste.
There in our grottos, where dolphins die,
Giving the walls a new glow,*
Nereids shall tend you, with rolling eye—
Never a pain shall you know.

Pluto

Now do they sleep in very ecstacy
Of sound—do slumber in the joy of song,
That thrills them into listening helplessness,
And makes them babes, who yet are coarse, hard, bold
And lustful men.

Siren: to the Corsairs

Sleep, tired eyes,
A long, sweet calm I bring ;
Elysian prize

* The dying dolphin turns almost all kinds of pretty shade
and colours.

For you is on the wing.
Rest, . . . rest, . . . rest ;
No more wild seas or gales
Shall stop your quest,
Or tear your speeding sails.
Sleep, . . . sleep, . . . sleep ;
The task is nearly done,
The last port almost won—
Sleep, sleep, ye weary sailors, sleep.
While slumbers sweet
Enchain sour roving minds,
Your winding sheet
I spread where no one finds.
Dream, . . . dream, . . . dream,
And think yourselves at home,
Where bright eyes gleam
A welcome from the foain.
Peace, . . . peace, . . . peace ;
From pain and toil release.
Now comes your long repose
From all earth's transient woes ;

•
Your circumscribéd lives shall cease
In waters deep:
Sleep, . . . sleep, . . . sleep,
For ever . . . and for ever . . . shall ye sleep.

Crash ! on the rocks—'tis the craft aground !
A moment thus, . . . and the waters bound
Into the hold, and she reels aside,
Then backward falls in the wolfish tide !
Flung from its feet is the watch on deck ;
An instinct tells of approaching wreck :
Up from below the affrighted leap !
Half-folded still in the arms of sleep.

Time grants no space to think of boats
Or planks, or anything that floats !
Already rise the waters high ;
And circles round, with horrid cry
The vulture of the seas ! There's not
Enough of time but for a jot
Of low and half-unconscious pray'r, .
As eyes dilate and daftly stare
About. Ah, now a rush !—a leap !—
A roll ! . . . a gurgle: and the deep,
Hard rocks, gulls screaming and the foam,
Yon pallid moon and star-flecked dome,
Arrayed in mute sublimity,
Are all the human eye can see.

FINIS

THE SHIP

The Ship

(For Music)

INTRODUCTION

Chant the story, wing the glory
Of this argosy to be:
Bridge of ocean, what devotion
Men have shown for worth of thee!

New-world finder, nations' binder,
Widener of the world of thought;
Thing of beauty, blessing duty,
With what skill and patience wrought!

Snow-winged bird of seas uncharted,
Scene of actions hero-hearted,
With glamour thou art fraught!
With what glamour, with what glamour
With what glamour thou art fraught

THE BUILDING

Lay it true and strong and straight,
Keel to plough the azure main ;
Ribs of steel to hold the freight
Round the world and back again.
Rivet, bolt and plate and beam,
Sternpost, stem and transom strong,
Deck and bulwarks, leakless seam,
Hammered by the sinewy throng.

Swing the sledges, swing them right,
Beat up every rivet tight ;
Clamp and ratchet, knee-piece, strip—
Thus is built the noble ship !

See ! she glides, as though with life,
Down the ways and floats in pride !
Prey of seas where winds are rife,
Carrier Swift where calms abide.
Now within her hidden ways
• Throbs the power to drive her fast ;
Builder's splendid source of praise,
Glow and glamour round her cast !

Helm and hull, spars, sails and ropes,
Centre of a thousand hopes;
Pistons, shaft and cylinders—
Mark what potency is hers!

LOADING AND MANNING

With what shall we load her, this craft so fair?
And how shall we man her, when manned with care?
Link 'twixt our islands and countries afar,
Industry's peacefully water-borne car.
Load her and man her for far eastern shores,
Where merchandise rich swells the dark traders'
stores.

With western goods we store the hold,
(O Chief Mate, see all stowed aright!)
From loom and foundry, wrought for gold,
The trophies of industrial might;
Dead-weights below, light cases last,
(O Boatswain, send more gear aloft!);
Shore up that boiler, shore it fast;
The 'tween-decks stow with cottons soft.

On hatches now ; the hold is full ;
Here, bear a hand, a lusty pull,
And swing her from the quayside free,
Her head for yonder furthering sea !

Now comes the crew of white men bold,
(O Captain, have you clearance there ?)
Lithe sailors whose tanned features hold
Salt yarns of things few landsmen dare.
Mark how they grip each dripping rope,
(O Boatswain, pipe that hawser out !)
A nation's pride, a Navy's hope ;
Now list, ye, to their hauling shout—

Boatswain's Cry

Haul, boys, haul !
For the girls on the quay
Are a-watchin' you and me ;
So it's *haul*, boys ; HAUL, boys,—HAUL !

IN THE OFFING

Farewell, dear land that gave us birth ;
Adieu, awhile to all we love ;

Farewell, ye scenes of native mirth ;
Fair seas below, blue skies above ;
Westward we steer our charted course,
By wind and steam's united force.

Captain's Song

Now, sprung from yonder quay's dull side,
The open sea lies fair ;
We'll out upon our ocean wide—
The land is full of care.
For Neptune's brethren are we,
Let's up and home again—to sea !

The hold is full ; our sails are set ;
The wide world lies before ;
O wind astern, which brings no fret,
Blow us from this rank shore !

The spume may be around our knees,
White horses running high ;
Yet, oh, we love the freshening breeze,
The stretch of God's clear sky !
With tautened sheets and yards hauled square,
Oh, glorious is the seaman's fare !

For far ahead a port we seek,
An eastern port of ease ;
Where maidens lithe, of dusky cheek,
Glad hail us, from the seas.

OUTWARD BOUND

The decks are cleared, the watch is set,
Stout hearts are touched with fond regret ;
The Captain walks his poop in pride,
And scans the endless heaving tide.
Kind Neptune, grant us fortune fair,
And then for gales we shall not care.

Chief Mate's Song

I have watched the sun at midnight
In that far-off northern sea ;
I have seen old Nature's lyddite
Burst on our blackened lee,
When the squalls were round us shrieking,
'Mid Western Ocean foam,
And savage seas were seeking
To claim us for their own—

To claim us for their own.
For I am a Nature's wanderer,
To every coast-line known ;
With every flag for my flag, till my flag waves me
home.

Through the tropics I have sweltered,
With a biscuit for each day ;
Round the Horn in gales I've weltered,
Felt typhoons off far Cathay ;
Heard the salt sea surges singing,
As up every shore they roam ;
And a hundred strange tongues ringing
In the hundred lands I've known—
In the hundred lands I've known.
For I am Nature's wanderer,
O'er every ocean blown ;
With every land for my land, till my land calls me
home.

* * * *

Here on our native sea,
Eastward now we steer ;
Cupped by vast infinity—
Heaven and death, how near !
White the foam that flies asunder,
As her bows the waters cleave ;

While with mimic claps of thunder,
All her sails to leeward heave.
Movement, freedom unrestricted,
Never yet in full depicted ;
Phase of beauty nigh supernal
Here is thine, O Sea eternal !
Here is thine, here is thine, O Sea eternal !

Chief Engineer's Song

How lightly the wavelets are touched by the wind,
As they ripple and shine in these tropical rays ;
How sprightly the graceful ship runs, like a hind
In the fulness of youth and the pride of her days !—
With her pistons, her crankshaft, propeller and all,
How she races and lawsuit, to that windjammer's gall !

There's joyance more gracious in movement at sea,
Than the landsman can know in his circumscribed
... lot ;
There's breadth to the soul, and a mind's liberty,
And there's peaceful content which no earth-cloud
can blot :—
Ah, but where should we be without glorious steam ?—
Half dead in these doldrums, or dreaming some
dream.

Then off with the gloom, the oppression and care,
That gnaw at our hearts in the ways of the shore;
Here's pleasure unbounded for all who will fare
To the furthest of harbours and back to the Nore.—
But wherever you steer on this heaving wide world,
Let it be where a feather of steam is up-curled.

IN HARBOUR

Wanderers from those Isles of Fortune,
Set in northern seas afar,
Here we lie until we languish,
'Neath the sacred deodar.

There, upon the windless river,
Yards 'mong palms where monkeys run,
Lies our ship, that seems to sorrow
At this everlasting sun.

Maidens draped in shimmering gauzes,
Eyes where fires of night-time lie ;
But they are not Albion's daughters,
Thus we let them pass us by.

Second Mate's Song

Keep ye your eastern beauties, with
Their dark and luminous eyes,
Where sparks of hazy passion lie,
Like stars in midnight skies ;
Keep ye their sensuous movements and
Their wealths of jetty hair,—
Though rise they high, they come not nigh
Our British girls so rare.

I care not for their luscious lips,
Though none so richly red,
So tempting that e'en Cupid might,
To make them thus, have bled.
I hear their dreaming-hull-like tones,
And mark their languid air ;
Yet, kin nor kith, they cannot with
Our British girls compare.

Though saunter they 'mid orange groves,
Or bask in terraced shade ;
Or move at night through famous halls,
In sprightly masquerade ;

Yet not their witching lace-draped forms,
Their busts so full and bare,
Can equal you, sweet gentle, true,
Our British girls so fair.

Then all your night-eyed beauties keep,
Their glamour flits me by ;
Their beauty, languor, warm romance
Beget in me no sigh ;
For, roaming by the babbling brook,
Or merged in household cares,
My every part, by Nature's art,
A British girl ensnares.

Boatswain's Chanty

Oh, it's fine to lie a-watching these gay fireflies at
night—
Heave away the anchor !
There's a glamour in the colour of these [eastern
maids' delight—
Heave away the anchor !
For we know a land where pleasure
Runs in fairer sunset measure,
When the work of life gives leisure—

Oh, and that's the land for us !
Oh, and that's the land for us !
Heave away the anchor,
Heave away the anchor !
Far across that tumbling ocean
Lies the land of our devotion—
And that's the land of England, merry though her
skies are grey !
And that's the land of England, merry though her
skies are grey !

HOMEWARD BOUND

How heavy hang these jury sails,
From yards that week in idleness ;
While we do well-nigh ask for gales
To break these days monotonous.

Here broken down—a long week lost ;
Where now's the steam they boasted loud ?
How better by some gale be tost,
Than thus be crushed and bowed !

Dull-eyed we seamen hang about
In these long calms, where decks grow hot ;
At night almost afraid to shout,
By day all sullen with our lot.

In eager joy to feel at last,
As yonder comes across the waste
A breeze that cries to woe—"Avast!"
And home we speed in foaming haste.

Second Engineer's Song

We may steam the wide world over,
We may tread each foreign shore,
Ev'ry one at heart a rover,
Probing pleasure to the core ;
But in some country, near or far,
Each roamer owns a mistress-star.

So it's home, sweetheart, home ;
It's home across the sea ;
Our valves they are all tightened up,
And every crank runs free—

And every crank runs free, lass ; and every crank
runs free ;
And o'er the sea we're bowling now to home, dear
home, and thee. }

They may call us light-o-hearts,
We lone wanderers of the deep ;
Say we play our fickle parts,
While the world around us weeps ;
But 'tis not they who learn to know
The hearts that roam yet homeward go.

For it's home, dearest, home ;
It's homeward now we come,
With every pound of steam she'll stand,
Each boiler like a drum.—
Each boiler like a drum, lass ; all cranks so cool
and free ;
We're swinging o'er the smoking seas to harbour,
home and thee !

Third Mate's Song

We have threshed the world around, love,
With the foam along our lee ;
But now we're homeward-bound, love,
To England and to thee !
So let the winds their chanties yell,
Like demons wild with glee ;
What should we care, who seek to swell
The knots we make to thee ?

Down the wind she wallows—
Homeward-bound, homeward-bound !
Rolling seas where are no shallows—
Homeward-bound, homeward-bound !
Sheets and tacks like harp-strings ;
Home, to where the lark sings ;
Down the wind our craft swings—
Homeward-bound, homeward-bound !

We have threshed the world about, love,
With death so much at hand
That oft we had to doubt, love,
If God could understand.

But now those dangers lie astern—
We'll soon be safe on land ;
At home with thee to take a turn,
And pleasure's sails expand.

AT THE QUAYSIDE :

Ballad of the Brown Sailorman

‘O Sailorman, brown Sailorman, whence come you
with your load ?’—
O'er heaving tracks of bluey green where no man
sees the road”—
Your load that hints of far-off lands, gay colours
and romance,
Dark eyes, and twilight beauties such as love the
‘ moonlit dance.’

“O maiden, fresh and comely, with your cheeks of
ensign-hue”—
“Nay, flatter not, brown Sailorman ; be simple and,
be true”—

“From East to West the world around we trimmed
our slatting sails,
Till scarce a yard of canvas stood to meet the
freshening gales.”

“O Seaman, tell me truly now what maids you
sought to woo”—

“We come from shores where ne'er are seen such
lovely maids as you”—

“For it is said that sailors have sweethearts by
the score,

A new one in each port they touch from China to
the Nore.”

“We have scudded under poles as bare as is your
beauteous brow”—

“I fear that Neptune's taught to you a courtier's fickle
vow”—

“Becalmed we lay three tropic weeks, with only
thoughts of you,

And sweet remembrances of home, to help us bear
them through.”

“Yes, Sailor, brown Sailor, we know the
tales you tell”—

“You cannot know that which you doubt, my saucy
English Nell”—

“When home you come a-sailing, from the loves
you leave behind

In those far-off Eastern harbours, where an incense
fills each wind.”

“You know we ride the “great seas round for
England’s daughters’ sake”—

“And yet how oft, by riding on, those daughters’
hearts you break”—

“Nay, blame us not. Do we not know the glare of
desolate skies,

With naught but them and savage seas to meet our
aching eyes?”

“Chide, chide no more, brown Sailorman ; we
know your hearts of steel”—

“And we the worth of England’s daughters, with
their love of honest weal.”

“So here’s unto the Sailorman, his love, his island-
home ;

For whom and which he ploughs the seas,
In tropic heat, in Arctic breeze—

• His love, his island-home ;
His island-home, his island-home,
His island-home and love !”

THREE SONNETS



Foam-flecked and fierce, rain-battered, impotent,
How heave these liquid hills a dozen ways,
Like blind mutes seeking pity in amaze,
Only to fall crushed, hammered, helpless, pent :

A rush of wind !—a pause . . . The air is rent
By God's resounding booms !—a zigzag blaze
Of yellow light that rips the smoking haze
Of pelted, beaten waves !—and all are spent.

A burst of splendour ! And how still 's the air ! ¶
How warm, translucent, yet how fresh and sweet !
Glad Nature smiles and seems to say, " How fair ! "

The shimmering sea, cupped into soft retreat
By yonder wondrous dome, moves debonair,
A smooth-faced, lovely, gentle-seeming cheat.

Alone I strayed, this darkling autumn night,
 Where sullen waves fell white-capped near my
 feet ;
 On this drawn face soft struck the clammy sleet,
 And ocean dirged her anguish infinite :

The wind moaned fear, as touched with human
 fright ;
 While each dark cave, from out its deep retreat,
 Gave groaning back the waters—but to meet
 Those stern relentless seas upreared to smite !

So thought hard beat upon this troubled brain,
 And thundered back in awful impotence,
 Till madness well-nigh broke the sapping strain.

Thus toiled this breast, 'neath anguish so immense
 It might have held a thousand torn hearts' pain ;
 And with the breeze it cried : "Ah, Fate ! Why ?—
 Whence ?"

The sea gives forth its dead—here, at my feet,
 Fall spurned-up weeds, and whited bones which
 tell
 Of ocean's greed and tempest-thundered knell—
 Ay, speak of lives up-closed, with hopes full sweet :

Here foaming rush the waves—drop, and retreat ;
 And leave the battered sands strewn all too well
 With splintered planks of some fair ship that fell,
 When charged the monstrous, green-seas, wolfish,
 fleet !

Back, on the drear repelling beach of Now,
 The sullen tide of retrospection hurls
 Dead hopes, songs' echoes, and a sullied vow.

So memory's returning wave up-curls
 Its crest, and strikes this Lethe-wishing brow ;
 And all the past's dead wreckage round me whirls.

OCEAN MURMURS



THE BIRTH_C OF APHRODITE

It chanced upon one summer's perfect day
That fast in sleep and dreams the lame god lay,
On glistening sands, made golden by
Olympian Phœbus' life enquickening ray.
And near the slumbering god's soft bed—
Where round waves rolled by zephyrs led,
Too slow to tower high—
Some Nereids with the seafoam played,
And fancifully formed a maid
O'er beauteous to sigh.
Bright Phœbus, watching, smiled at their conceit,
Who sought to make of foam a woman meet
To fit their fancy's fair demand—
A shape divine, in all but life complete.
And while he eyed those nymphæ play,
So near the margin of the bay
That washed the gleaming sand,
This thought his mind quick seized upon,
To end the work so far well-done—
Let breath the form expand.
Thus sprung foam-fashioned Aphrodite there,
To hold, to wander, suffer and to dare.
The genial god,
Unheeding jealous Juno's voiced alarms,

Had kissed that form of lovely make
Straightway to life, and full awake
To all her wondrous charms.
That moment did Hephaestos ope his eyes ;
The nymphs fell back, in mute dismayed surprise ;
And, turning, sank in haste below
To tell their sisters of the marvellous wise
They made the figure grow.
Not so the limping god of fire ;
His heart was seized with hot desire—
Possession's white, heat glow ;
And, springing to his feet, he ran,
Secured the maid of faultless plan
And all that beauty could bestow.

THE CRY OF THE SEA

There's a sough in the wind as it speeds a-lee,
And a greeny streak in yon weather-sky ;
There's a sob as of pain in the heaving sea,
And a sullen fall to each roller high—
Yea, wherever it be, there's a cry in the sea
That baffles the brain of humanity.

On all hands there's a sound that the seaman knows,
But the landsman is dead to, as home he goes :
'Tis the moan of the sea in a pent-up state,
When the mighty winds for their orders wait—
That choked, everlasting, primeval cry
Of the great wide sea when its peace must die.

Oh, the ocean's weird cry ! 'tis a mystical thing
That's carried afar with a mournful swing
When its peace must die, and its waters moan
At the death of the calm that was all their own :
For, wherever it be, there's a cry in the sea
That springs from the source of sympathy.

There's the crack of the whip of a wind-god !—
Hark,
'Tis the whip of a hundred leagues or so ;
There's a tremulous heave in yon leeward barque,
As she feels the gale she must undergo :
Ah, wherever she be, that wild call of the sea
She knows as some poor craft's elegy.

In the trough of the sea, where the birds lie low,
And the live green's flecked with a frothing snow,
There is hovering a pained, ineffectual cry ;

While the white-headed courses, leaping high,
Heave a snort and a deafening threat as they crash
Down the trembling vales, 'neath the storm's wild
lash ! . . .

Oh, the shriek of the sea !—'tis a passionate thing
That circles the world on the storm-god's wing !—
The ocean that roars, in tumultuous pain,
At the savage, irresistible hurricane !
For, wherever it be, there is hate in the sea
To the mighty winds in their tyranny ! . . .

There's a slower pace in the grey, jagged clouds ;
There's regret in the breeze that its strength is spent ;
There's a lesser pull on the straining shrouds,
And a sigh in the ocean, bespeaking content—
Yea, wherever it be, there is joy in the sea
To regain its broken tranquility.

There's an arm's-length of blue, and a long slow fall
In the measured waves as they shoreward crawl ;
There's a feeling of strained-for relief and rest
In the ravaged ocean's pain-throbbed breast,
And a space-filling, low, dull rumble of praise
For the promised return of gentler days.

Oh, the call of the sea!—'tis a wondrous thing
That stirs a man's heart as a martial ring;
That binds with a glamourous, mystical thong,
And leads us afar like a siren's song:
But, wherever it be, that weird cry of the sea
Still baffles the brain of humanity.

BALLAD OF THE *Ocean Kite*

East-nor'-east a quarter east,
Like a shark on flying prey,
When one more spurt would give a feast
To glut a gormand's day!—
Went the *Ocean Kite*, oh, a clipper tight,
Through the shimmering star-lit spray!

Royals in and staysails fast,
Up she stood like fair renown!
Bows into it, on she passed,
Making tracks for Hoogli's town!
Sixteen knots an hour—her proud fleet's prouder
flow'r!—
A-running of her easting down.

I. Sixteen knots per hour is what a good sailing ship will often make when running before the strong winds and squalls into which she gets on the other side of the Cape, along the 40th parallel of Southern latitude.

From the Cape to Garden Reach,
Ballasted, for orders, she ;
And every sail, from luff to leach,
Straining like a Mate on spree ;
With her Mersey crew, bully Capt:
More devilish than a hungry sea.

• • •
Came four-bells, the mate's first watch.
"Heave the log, and mark it well,"—
Smoking, ordered Captain Kotch,
Then sought the binnacle. . . .
"Off a point"! he yelled, straight the wheelsman
felled, • •
And sneered, "Galoot shanghaied from hell"!

Burst the main top-gallant sail !—
As the man resumed his place ;
Burst at kiss of freshening gale,
Tattered in its fierce embrace !
"Lower-away that sprag ! Get, each mother's rag !
And man the weather t' gal'n' brace !"

Cried the fighting Skipper, thus,—
Shouting, grasped the poop's fore-rail,
Cuse on curse, a dozen, plus

Threats of violence at wholesale.
Rattled down the spar, flew the white foam far,
While red-hot orders franked the gale !

“Call all hands ! Go, Mister Croft,
Get that new t’ gan’ sel bent.
Up !—you niggers, up aloft ” !
And up the shrouds they went. . . .
Tatters down at last, gantline ³ hitched on fast,
Then up the brand-new sail was sent. . . .

“Spread !—boys, spread along the yard !
Haul that weather-earin’ out ” !
Yelled the Bo’sun, hoarse and hard,
A sailorman devout ;
On the foot-rope³ then sat two Swedish men
The sheets to shackle to their “clout.”

2. A gantline is a rope used for hoisting or lowering a sail or yard.

3. The foot-rope is that on which men stand to stow or reef a sail.

Round the pumps the Mate tor~~e~~ heav'n ;
On the poop the Captain blazed ;
Worked aloft that British ~~seven~~
Among the foreign oaths they raised. . .
Now the rovings⁴ on, and the gantline gone,
"To cut," came orders sulphur-glazed.

Flashed the knives, on stops⁵ they leapt ;
Bellied out the sail ahead ;
Sagged below,—then upwards swept,
A monstrous bag of dread !
Downwards sent two men—marvel 'twas not ten—
To box the compass of the dead.

'Thwart the top-sail brace dropped one,
Bounded off, then seen no more ;
Shrieked the other and was gone,

4. Rovings are the yarns or pieces of spunyarn used for
tying the sails to the jackstays on the yards.

5. Stops are the yarns that tie the sail in a roll when put
in the sail-locker.

Amid the leeward roar.
Bully Skipper then called them fools, not men ;
And cast their slops⁶ the while he swore.

Off the yard the others sprang;
Down went every man but two ;
Sheets hauled home, the chanty rang,—
What else could sailors do ?
“Sally Brown” was sung—up the new sail sprung,
And tugged to pull the clipper through.

Loading jute 'bove Garden Reach,
Said the Skipper to his Mate,
“*Ours* the passage now to preach—
The fastest down to date !
Lost two damped galoots—both in my slop-suits—
And gained two days to square the slate.”

6. Every deep-water ship carries a store of—generally very inferior—clothes for the men; these are termed “slops,” and the seaman who purchases *none* of them during a voyage is rather a rarity.

TO THE KITTEWAKE AT THE BRIDGE

What message, what song, or what story,
O Bird of the surges a-lee,
Bring you, in your free-wingèd glory,
To drear-thoughted London and me ?
Your wings bear a sense of infinites
That speak of the God of all things.
Your grace ?—it is that of the lonely seas,
And your cry is their murmurings.

What do you, or see you, to keep you
So far from the rolling wave's crest ?
Can these muddy waters e'er reap you
The splendour of Ocean's clear breast ?
Can you, with your memories of vastness,
Of grandeur too awesome to paint,
Here soar in the City's dull fastness,
Nor shrink at its misery's plaint ?

Or, say, do you come with your beauty,
Your wistful, sweet hints of the sea,
To speak to us workers of duty ?—
Though rarely comes love as the fee.

Or is 't that your unspoken tidings
Are but of the ocean, the breeze, /
The fair welkin where stars have their hidings—
Then, O God, for those scenes instead of these !

THE PAGAN'S HYMN TO THE SEA

Wonder of mysteries, mighty, magnificent,
Rolling from Ever to Ever again ;
Say who has fashioned thee, made thee omnipotent ?—
 Past all our compassing,
 Scoffer at warriors, dread of all men !
Voice that is first in our ears dull and bounded,
 Voice that is strongest and least understood ;
Voice of the great Mother Nature unsounded,
 What is the message that
 Wondrously finds its response in our blood ?

Teacher of things which our seers cannot read in thee,
 Stronger than gods in their power divine,
Tell us what monsters here riot and breed in thee,—
 Tell us thy far-aways,
 While on the land in our narrows we pine.

Thou the Unquestionable, thou the Unknowable,
Where lies the might of thy call unto men ?
Bidding them plow thy fields, green yet unsowable ;
Caller whom none disobey,
Calling and drowning, yet calling again.

Marvel incomparable, tenderly fawning
Here on the land-lip thou kissest in grief—
Grief that thou comest from yonder fair dawning,
Comest in cunningness,
Only to find thyself robbed of thy fief.
Here thou may'st roar in thy rushings so thunderous ;
Here and no further, says something most strange ;
Bound to thy tethérings,
Emblem of steadfastness, creature of change.

THE SONG OF THE SAIL

Lazily stretching, and gently fanned by the breath of
a soft west wind,
I pull at my sheets with a careless pull, and a sigh
at the streak behind.

Though it's heigh and yo-ho, when a light wind's aft,
And the blue sea lies before,
To the man at the helm—if the pay be good, and
his ship has a fair salt store.

Yet the never-to-be of this endless stretch of the
quietly heaving blue,
With its long sunned days and its night-times grand,
will bear *me* to no harbours new.

So I sag at the leach, and my luff flaps loud, while
the seaman drones his song ;
And I creak, through my spars and my halyards stout,
for a breeze to come along.

And the winds they are good—ay, the winds are
brave ; for they leave me not long alone
To be chafed, as I snap, with impatience keen, for
port that I have not known.

Now some cloud—I descry 'neath yon' haloed moon,
as she tips the idle waves
With a glint of her pallid and misty gold on a myriad
heroes' graves. . . .

There's a puff up aloft, and a breath a low, of the
breeze from yonder clouds ;

There's a strain at my sheets, while the braces lift,
and up-tauten weather-shrouds.

And now over to leeward our good ship leans, under
press of the freshening breeze ;

As I know, and the spars and the sailors know, that
here ends our slothful ease.

For my bolt-ropes are tugging like horses wild, and
the white foam flies ahead ;

While away there astern is a seething track, where
before lay waters dead !

Here's a thong of the sea, in a flying spray, which
would whip the old moon young !

And it whistles a stave of an air so weird that no
mortal man could tongue.

There's a pæan of strength in the rushing wind,
when it rounds us sails like bags ;

When it snatches the seas in its militant sweep,
but to tear them into rags !

'Tis the anthem of Energy,' wild and fierce, as it
'bursts from Nature's heart !

'Tis the anthem that never musician shall set, till
honour and honesty part !

There's the force of a world, at its primal strength,
in these rollers long and green,

As they thunder along in their measureless might
and their majesty serene !

Then it's oh-heigh-ho to the fearless breeze, to the
sweeping waters high,

To us bellying sails, to the drum-tight craft and the
"post-boy"**—dotted sky !

There's a wonderful sense of infinite strength, of the
grace of force at work,

In the rushing breeze and the flying ship and the
smoking seas and murk !

And it's thus that I chase me the reddening sun this
universe around,

That I shorten the days, as I travel east, till my final
port is found.

* "Post-boys" are little, ragged, black clouds which often
accompany the beginning of a long, hard blow in high latitudes.

The Autobiography of a Nature's Nomad

MY VAGABONDAGE

By J. E. PATTERSON

DEMY 8vo.

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